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IV. A few years ago we were engaged in a terrible war for the life of the nation, in which more than two million of our citizens bore an active part. In nearly every State there are men who risked their lives for their country and distinguished themselves on the battlefield, and who now in maturer years are showing daily proofs of ability and integrity in their various callings. But instead of giving our highest prize to any of these, we have bestowed it upon one who stood aloof from the great struggle, though he was a brawny young man with no special ties to detain him at home.

V. The Democratic party offered in succession, as presidential candidates, George B. McClellan, Horatio Seymour, Horace Greeley, Samuel J. Tilden and Winfield S. Hancock, and with each of them it was defeated. When it offered a candidate who could stand no comparison with any one of them, either in public services or in private character, it was successful.

VI. We have many citizens in public life who, both by instinct and by breeding, are gentlemen in the worthiest sense of the word. But to represent us in our highest office, and receive the ministers from foreign courts, we have chosen a man whose vulgarity and lack of breeding are conspicuous at every turn, from the clumsy wit of his veto messages to his ostentatious disregard of the Christian Sabbath.

VII. A considerable number of citizens who professed to be intent upon a great reform gave their confidence and their votes to the candidate of a party that, so far from being identified with any reform, has opposed every one that has ever been effected. The President thus seated has openly, notoriously, and systematically disappointed every expectation on which he gained independent votes, and has brought about his own renomination through the ordinary machinery of the lowest class of politicians. Yet most of those sanguine reformers are preparing to vote for him a second time.

Solution.—There are but two possible explanations of this cumulative paradox. Either the dishonesty of the so-called Independent surpasses all that has ever been laid to the charge of the strictest partisan, or else we are undergoing an epidemic of political insanity.

ROSSITER JOHNSON.

VIII.

WITH FOUR GREAT MEN.

HENRY CLAY.

I HAVE interviewed seven Presidents of the United States, two or three kings and queens, including his Majesty of Dahomey, and the Queen of the Sandwich Islands.

My first experiment in interviewing a great man was an amateur one—I have since practiced it professionally—about forty-five years ago, and was on Henry Clay. He was at Saratoga, and I determined to see and talk with him. I cannot remember the name of the hotel, but I know it was not the leading one of the place, and the servants were all blacks, and very proud of their great guest, guarding him with a vigilance which only a negro knows.

Whether the man to whom I applied for an audience with the great statesman was Mr. Clay's own man, or not, I do not know, but his majesty informed me most positively that,

"Yer keyant see Mass Clay, sah! less yer sen up yer kyard an yer business."

The first I complied with, the last I hesitated about, but finally said that I had no business, but curiosity to see the great man. After the servant had been upstairs a few minutes, I saw a head bent over the balusters of the first floor, which I knew to be Mr. Clay's by his portraits, and was aware that he was making an inspection of me, which inspection was immediately followed by the mention of my name and the invitation to " Come up ! "

Mr. Clay was in his shirt sleeves, without a vest, his suspenders hanging loose, his hair awry, and in a pair of cloth slippers that looked as though they might have been in the wars ; but, with all this, there was a light that beamed in his face unmistakably of intellect, and notwithstanding the unpicturesqueness of his square-cut mouth, when he smiled, he smiled all over. He stood in the entry until I had mounted the stairs, then advanced and took my hand, not releasing it until we had reached his room, during which time I was endeavoring to make some sort of apology for my early call, and he as earnest in assuring me that I had done right, and that he was glad to see me, which I by my vanity and by his earnestness was made to believe, and when he had led me to a chair and apologized for going on with his dressing while he talked, I felt perfectly at my ease.

I always have thought since there was a sublime policy in all that interview. He talked for history, as if he knew that the time would come when I would tell it to thousands, and that it would be to his interest to make an impression. He started out as with the idea, not so much of talking himself as making me talk, and began by asking me my business, or profession. At that time I was an artist, in a branch that led me into intimate connection with engraving on wood, then an art in its infancy, having less than two score of devotees, but since increased to a thousand, or more, in this country. He questioned and listened, went on with his toilet, and suggested ideas until, as I found that he was dressed, I rose to go, looked at my watch and saw, to my astonishment, that I had been there an hour and a quarter, but yet the great man had made me feel that I had not bored him, but, on the contrary, that he had been pleased with the talk.

Whether this was the perfection of policy and politeness combined, I cannot tell, or whether it was all real; but, when I was going, he asked earnestly for my address in New York, which, when he had received, he promised that whenever he came to that city he would call on me and have another talk. He came here half a dozen of times afterwards, but the call never came off. Years afterward I was telling of this interview and promise to Thurlow Weed, and the old man laughed. " Yes !" he said, " that was like Henry; he always sent everybody from him charmed, because he made them think he was charmed with them." I have no doubt this was true, though it was a wet blanket on my vanity.

WM. MAKEPEACE THACKERAY.

A second damper was one administered by Thackeray, to whom I was once telling of this interview with Clay, and his mournful remark to me on the penalties of greatness, the greatest of which was that he never was alone, even in the sanctity of his own bedroom; he did not know but " somebody might be peeping through the keyhole." I ventured to say that such a feeling must be terrible, and a living nightmare. " Oh !" said Thackeray, " *you* need never fear that."

As I was then in the first flush and vanity of my literary career, I felt as if the remark was impertinent ; but it was Thackeray all over ; he never missed the chance.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

My next contact with a great man, where I felt as if politeness, without policy, redeemed everything, was with Abraham Lincoln in 1861, when everybody flocked to Washington, and I, among the rest, on what I thought was national business, but what I am now inclined to believe was entirely my own. I had little experience in approaching great men, and what I did have had always been attended with success. I wanted to see the President, and I made my way directly to the White House, thinking I had only to announce that I was there, and be received with open arms.

I found a crowd of men, women, and officers in uniform about the corridors, and asked one of them where I could find Mr. Lincoln. He pointed to a door that stood ajar, and I went to it without thinking where it might lead to, and pushed it further open. As I afterward learned, the doorkeeper had only that moment left his post to go into the next room for an instant. As I looked in, I saw a tall, gaunt individual sitting at a table in the middle of the room, looking over some papers. He said nothing, but beckoned with his finger, and as his portrait was not then as familiar as it was afterward, I did not recognize him. I went to him, and he asked me, as I then thought, in a slight tone of irritation, "What do you want?" I answered that I wanted Mr. Lincoln. "I am Mr. Lincoln," he said, more pleasantly. I at once dashed into my business, and dispatched it in as few words as possible, all of which I had rehearsed before, and though, as I now know, it could not have interested him in the least, he listened with profound attention. When I had finished, he scratched a few words on a piece of paper, signed it A. L., and handed it to me with the simple words, "Take that to Mr. Cameron."

At that moment, as I rose to my feet, a man entered with two cups and saucers, a plain tin pot, and the usual paraphernalia for tea or coffee.

"Take a cup of tea, Colonel?" said the great man. At that moment I thought of the old story told of some afterward celebrated marshal, with whom Napoleon made the same mistake; and as I was only trying to be a colonel, my airy, fairy scheme being to organize a regiment of compositors, pressmen, writers, and general newspaper men, to disseminate Northern newspapers, and their ideas, as we advanced into regained territory, why I thought it a good chance to get off the old story on the president, and said, "In what regiment, Mr. President?"

"Oh! that will all come in good time," he answered, with a little laugh. "This is not a thing of a day."

I thanked him, and sat down to my coffee, saying something about intruding. His answer was:

"I'll tell you when to go. I guess I've learned that in this place, if I've learned nothing else. Beside that, I think you've learned something from the well-bred dog, and you know he always got out before he was kicked out."

The coffee was finished, and very bad coffee it was, during the drinking of which we had a little talk about coffee, and how to make it, in which he agreed with me that it was in the making, not in the coffee itself, and related how, when he was a young man, after traveling all night, cramped up in a stage, in southern Illinois, he stopped at a small wayside inn, where he had fried chicken, buckwheat cakes and coffee for breakfast.

"Such coffee, sir! to say nothing of the buckwheat cakes and chicken, I had never before tasted. It was delicious, and as I found out afterward was simply made from parched rye."

I did not say anything to Mr. Lincoln about his having been cooped up all night, and being cold and hungry, but I had a suspicion that this may have had something to do with the coffee.

The coffee dispatched I again rose to go. He took my hand very solemnly, and said, as I went out: "Don't mind Cameron if he's cross. He has a great deal to trouble him. Let me know how it turns out."

SIMON CAMERON.

And now from the great man who was naturally polite and amiable, I sped to the small one who was born snappish, and snobbish, and made every body about him the same way. On the route to him, at the War Department, I looked at the paper Mr. Lincoln had written. It read : " Examine, I think well of this. A. L."

I made my way, under surveillance, as though I was suspected of wishing to steal, to Mr. Cameron's door, and was met by a surly Irishman or Scotchman, who told me, as though he was himself the Secretary of War, that Mr. Cameron was engaged, and to my farther questions as to when I could see him, replied, with a scowl, that he did not know. " Come back in a week."

"See here, my friend," I said, " You don't seem to have any idea about time. Have you got a watch ?"

"No !" was the snarling answer.

"Well, take this one," I said, detaching my own, and slipping it into his willing hand. "It may help you to count time for a man who has none to spare."

"Come back in half an hour," he said, with a grim smile, as he slipped my ticker into his pocket.

I came back in half an hour, and was admitted to the little, great man, who, as the very extreme of Mr. Lincoln, sat enthroned in an immense velveted and gilded chair, surrounded by half a dozen clerks and lackeys, and bearing upon his face a look half of weariness, half of contempt. I was not asked to sit down, and delivered my credentials, Mr. Lincoln's bit of paper. He took it superciliously, glanced at it, and said, " Well, what is it ?" and commenced to speak in an undertone to one of his lackeys. Those who have been placed in a similar position can imagine that I did not tell my story very clearly. I was simply overawed by snobbery, and when the principal snob sneered and said, " It's all nonsense ! " I backed out, and went upon my way satisfied that the struggle was over. At the door I met the now owner of my watch, who vouchsafed the inquiry as to how I made out, but when I answered "Not at all," I noticed that he studied time well enough to know how to keep it.

J. W. WATSON.